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ABSTRACT

Since 1947, Lake City Community College (LCCC) has evolved from a forest ranger school to a junior college to a true community college. After World War II, Lake City, the "Forestry Capitol of the World," converted a local air base into the Columbia Forestry School (CFS). The first few years were characterized by extremely low enrollment and dwindling funds, causing the college president to appeal to the Florida Legislature for help with funding and administrative support. The University of Florida assumed management of the school, and, in 1950, CFS became the University of Florida Forest Ranger School. In 1962, the school was selected to join the newly created network of state community colleges as Lake City Junior College and Forest Ranger School. Subsequent to a fire in 1963, wooden buildings were replaced with brick, giving the school a more permanent and collegiate air. In 1970, the name was shortened to Lake City Community College. LCCC's Forest Technology program, like the college and the field of forestry, has undergone many changes. The original one-year certificate program became a two-year associate in science (AS) degree program in Forest Technology in 1970. In 1974, the Timber Harvesting Technician certificate became an AS degree in Forest Engineering Technology. The two programs were merged in 1989 to become an AS in Forest Technology. This 92-hour program is designed to train students in such areas as timber cruising, wood procurement, logging operations, and land surveying. Approximately 60% of the program takes place in outdoors classrooms, though course work also focuses on technical writing, botany, and mathematics. Though there has been little turnover in program faculty, the student population has changed to include more women and foreign students, though blacks remain underrepresented. (GFW)

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# FOREST TECHNOLOGY PROGRAM, LAKE CITY COMMUNITY COLLEGE: THE FOUNDING OF A SCHOOL, THE EVOLUTION OF A COLLEGE

November 13, 1990

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The Forest Technology Program at Lake City Community College (LCCC) is reflective of the values and visions that have forged the community college system in Florida since 1955. It is reflective of the district's vocational opportunities and challenges. It is reflective of the ingenuity and enterprise that transformed a surplus World War II military property into a place that would give returning servicemen an opportunity to train for a completely new line of work, one that would contrast sharply with the limitations of the wartime Armed Services and enable them to reside on the family farm or in the pine woods, yet earn a decent living for their families.

As the College has evolved into a true community college, the history of its founding in the Columbia Forestry School of 1947 is sometimes obscured, but never entirely forgotten. The purpose of this report is to record the history of the school and its several metamorphoses through forest ranger school, junior college, and community college. Its history reflects the changing needs of the district, and the essential

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connection of this district to the earth. It continues to attract the type of men and women who could be called, in the words of the fourth school director, Mr. J. Donald Lewis, Jr., "the salt of the earth."

Historical perspective

At the close of World War II, the United States Government relinquished an air base to the City of Lake City. At that time, Lake City was known as the "Forestry Capital of the World." Some of the town's most influential men had, for generations, been involved in the timber business, making their fortunes in turpentine, logging, rail freighting, and sawmill operations. They saw the air base as a natural site on which to found a forest ranger school, based on the model of the New York State Ranger School, in Wanakena. The Columbia Forestry School was founded in 1947, only the second in the nation. The first Chairman of the Board was Mr. Gordon Granger, a timberman, who financed the school with bonds sold to local citizens. The bonds were, in essence, donations rather than investments, since they never were repaid. The

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dormitory on campus today is named Granger Hall in honor of Gordon Granger.

The first director of the school was the county forester, Mr. Clarke "Click" Mathewson. Technical Building A, which houses the offices of instructional faculty and administrators, is officially named the Mathewson Building.

The entering class of 1947 had 12 members. Then as now, the campus was rather isolated. To pass the time, they competed in sporting events. They originated the College mascot, the timberwolf, and team colors of green and white, which are still the college colors. They started athletic teams for basketball and baseball, which remain the only men's intercollegiate teams sponsored by the College.

The Columbia Forestry School struggled along under Mathewson until 1949, when Granger and his supporters appealed to the Florida Legislature to help with funding and administrative support. The State designated the University of Florida to assume management of the school, and in 1950, it became the

University of Florida Forest Ranger School. The program became a one-year certificate course.

By 1952 enrollments were still low. The school was threatened with dissolution by the State Board of Control. Instead, Mathewson resigned, and in 1954 Mr. Herbert Attaway became director of the school, a position he held in various forms until 1966, when he was promoted to Dean of the Technical Division and Mr. Walter Knudsen was named director. Under Attaway, enrollments grew to about 100 students in each entering class, of whom about 75 percent were graduated.

When the State was forming the present-day network of community colleges, the school was selected as the location of a new community college. The name became Lake City Junior College and Forest Ranger School in 1962. It is said the founding president was more concerned with the image of the school as a junior college than a forest ranger's vocational program, and the program entered in competition with the transfer division. There has historically been tension, or perhaps healthy competition, between the transfer and

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vocational divisions.

The modernization of the campus appearance was aided by the unfortunate event of a fire in 1963. Gordon Summers, Jr., a Columbia High School sophomore at the time and a 1967 A.A. graduate of the College, recalls a jingle that the townspeople would chant:

"Lake City Junior College
"And Forest Ranger School,
"Burnt (sic) down and built back up,
"All brand new."

In truth, what was destroyed were wooden buildings remnant from the air base. In their place were erected contemporary brick buildings, giving the campus a more permanent and collegiate air.

In 1970 the name was changed a final time, to Lake City Community College, dropping the Forest Ranger School in name but retaining the image in the logo. The College logo continues to incorporate the image of the pine tree in recognition of its roots.

Internal reorganizations

Like the field of forestry, the Forest Technology

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Program has undergone internal changes. It is recognized the program's graduates must be developed along many dimensions in order to be competitive in the work place. The program was originally a one year certificate. In 1970 it became a two-year A.S. degree program in Forest Technology, in keeping with the philosophy of the community college. Beginning in 1968, a certificate called Timber Harvesting Technician could be earned, which in 1974 became an A.S. program in Forest Engineering Technology. The two programs were merged in 1989 to the one existing degree, an A.S. in Forest Technology.

Present-day perspective

The program is still an important concern, but it meets competition for top students from the four-year Forestry program available at universities such as the University of Florida (U.F.). An articulation agreement was established with U.F. for a two-plus-two program, which begins at this College with Pre-Forestry, a major concentration within the Associate of Arts program. Students who pursue the A.S. before

determining they want a four-year degree will find that only three or four of the required forestry courses will transfer.

Today there are only two full-time Forest Technology instructors: Knudsen, the former director, and a U.F. graduate, Kurt Havird. Lewis teaches a partial load in addition to his administrative responsibilities. Last school year a faculty position was relinquished because of low enrollments. The class that began this term is comprised of 60 students, of whom six are women.

Demographics

Forestry has traditionally been a man's field. The laborers were black or Caucasian men and the crew chiefs or professionals were always Caucasian men. In 1972 the program attained its first woman graduate, and most classes are now, proportionately, about ten percent women. To date there has never been a black graduate, although there was one Creole. Underrepresentation is still a problem with blacks, which is generally believed to be a holdover of

negative connotations of the pulp wood laborer, or in general, agricultural laborer. Industry has taken a lead in trying to increase the representation of blacks in this field by sponsoring scholarships. Nekoosa Packing Company has funded a $1500 annual scholarship that is exclusively for black men or women in the Forest Technology Program, and Lewis is pleased with the response he has gotten to the scholarship.

There has been very little turnover in the faculty and administration of the program. Knudsen, the program's third director, is still a full-time faculty member in the department. Lewis, a member of the faculty since 1976, has been director since 1985. Lewis was a member of the Class of 1962, the last class from the University of Florida Forest Ranger School. His class began with approximately one hundred men, and graduated seventy strong. Lewis describes the forestry industry as a cohesive network of people who work cooperatively - generally - but admits if one were outside the "good-old-boy" network or fell into disfavor, it would be a difficult group in which to

negotiate. The homogeneity and cohesiveness of foresters as a group have perhaps contributed to the difficulty that women and minorities have experienced in attempting to make inroads within the profession.

Forest Technology Program

Today, the official designation is Forest Technology Program, a 92-hour course leading to the Associate of Science degree. The latest issue of the Catalog describes the program as designed to prepare graduates "for careers in the forest industry as forest technicians in areas such as timber cruising, wood procurement, timber marking, logging operations, wood yard operations, site preparation and regeneration, land surveying, forest mapping and other positions associated with specialty wood products" (p. 97). Lewis explained that forest technicians, such as are trained by program, are intended to fill the gap between a woodsworker, or "woodrider", and a forester. Lewis refers to his graduates as mid-level managers: "They are people involved with gathering data. This data is then used by graduate foresters for

interpretation of forest conditions and productivity, to make natural resource decisions." Technicians work independently or may supervise other technicians or laborers.

The major employers of graduates are private industries such as Stone Container, Westvaco, or Champion International. A sizable minority are employed by state or federal agencies, such as the Florida Division of Forestry or the United States Department of Agriculture Forest Service, where they work in public forests. The Division of Forestry has a job classification entitled "Forest Ranger," which would be an entry-level position for these graduates. The average starting salary is about $15,500; the range, $13,000 to about $23,000 for last year's graduates. Employment prospects are consistently excellent.

National and International Renown

The program has always had national renown, and in the last two decades has attracted students from other countries as well. The current class includes two

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Caribbean students who were placed at this College by the United States Association for International Development (USAID). These students are from Dominica and St. Vincents in the Grenadines. Students have long been willing to travel to Lake City to participate in the program, because the training provided is unique. Alumnae can be found working all over the country and are heavily concentrated throughout the East and Central states.

Interestingly, during the 1960's and '70's, when enrollments were higher than in recent years, there was no competition from the other Florida community colleges for a program of this nature. In 1988, Pensacola Junior College received permission to initiate a forest technology program, via direct appeal from that district's legislators. The program director was a woman who has since left; the program has evidently been postponed.

Curriculum and laboratories - the woods as a classroom

Forest Technology is a very desirable course of study for any person who likes the outdoors, likes to

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work with the hands as well as the intellect, and wants to work independently. An aptitude for math and science is essential. It would be a poor selection for the man or woman who does not like to get dirty and fears Nature's creatures, like snakes and alligators. Introduction to the working conditions of the forest technologist starts right away, as the program is about sixty percent in the outdoors classrooms: the national, state and private forests in the area.

Every student is required to learn technical writing, botany and mathematics as high as trigonometry, which are essential for the proper execution of the forest technician's work. The technician is responsible for collecting data accurately, surveying and mapping stands of timber, calculating volume estimates, and writing detailed reports from the information gleaned while cruising timber. Often, it is a love of cruising timber that attracts the student to the program, and entering students are given ample lab time interspersed with the academic studies so as not to discourage the

outdoorsmen and women at the outset.

The students are also required to learn the maintenance, operation and repair of heavy equipment. They are taught to operate the many pieces of equipment that are used in planting and harvesting timber, and controlled burning, and are also taught basic repairs. They are taught the science of controlled burning, as well as given hands-on experience in preparing, commencing, controlling, and completing the burn cycle of a stand of timber. They are taught to navigate in a forest, and to identify poisonous snakes.

Twice each year, the students compete in field day events, when they demonstrate prowess in technical skills like volume estimation, pole estimation, and dendrology; also, in woodsman's skills like ax and knife throwing, log rolling, and cross cut sawing. In one field day they compete against students in the U.F. School of Forestry. Last year's winners included one of the women from LCCC, who excelled at knife throwing. Indeed, the program is becoming more popular with women who want to work outdoors.

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The past, the present, and the future

This summer, Lewis held the first reunion. He estimates the program, in all its incarnations, has graduated about 2500 men and women. His three-day reunion brought crowds of three-hundred-plus each day. He feels the camaraderie of the woodsmen continues to be a highlight of the field. The graduates form a cohesive network that assists with job placement for the new graduates, and lends support on the program's Industry Advisory Council.

Lewis feels that Forestry Technology is not as glamorous as it was in its heyday, but will continue to be an important vocational program. He foresees better representation by women and minorities, partly because of the attraction of the great outdoors, and partly because of the potential for stable employment for graduates, in this district and throughout the country. Students who are more academically motivated may be directed toward the Pre-Forestry A.A. degree, and become foresters whose jobs will more often keep them behind desks. Students who are more interested in the

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freedom of the outdoors and the independence of cruising timber will be attracted to the Forest Technology A.A. degree.

At the Community College, either direction is possible. Vocational or transfer? Both are positive choices; both, respectable options.

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Appendix 16

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